

News Release

EPA Region 2 - New Jersey, New York, Puerto Rico,
U.S. Virgin Islands, and Eight Federally Recognized Indian Nations



Methyl Bromide Investigation Expands to Puerto Rico

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(New York, N.Y. – April 16, 2015) The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, working with the Virgin Islands government, is investigating the March 2015 incident involving the use of a pesticide containing methyl bromide to fumigate a residence at the Sirenusa apartments on St. John in the U.S. Virgin Islands. Methyl bromide can only be used in very limited situations, mainly for fumigation of soil and commodities.

In the course of the investigation, it has been determined that the pesticide used in the U.S. Virgin Islands came from licensed distributors in Puerto Rico. EPA notified the Puerto Rico Department of Agriculture, which has direct enforcement authority for pesticide use violations. The Puerto Rico Department of Agriculture and EPA are gathering information from pesticide suppliers and applicators of methyl bromide products in Puerto Rico regarding their distribution or use of the products.

That investigation has revealed evidence that methyl bromide has been used improperly in Puerto Rico. Documents suggest that methyl bromide may have been improperly applied at various locations in Puerto Rico. EPA is working closely with the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry to follow up on any possible health effects.

Puerto Rico Department of Agriculture, with support from EPA, has sent inspectors to pesticide applicator companies, including Terminix. On April 14, 2015 the Puerto Rico Department of Agriculture issued a legal order regarding methyl bromide in Puerto Rico. The agencies will continue their investigation to ensure that public health is protected from any further improper use of methyl bromide.

Health effects of exposure to methyl bromide are serious and include headaches, dizziness, weakness and confusion. In severe cases exposure can cause central nervous system and respiratory system damage. Pesticides can be very toxic and it is critically important that restricted use pesticides be used only as approved by EPA.

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